

## What We May Face Ahead, Part 2 - Acts 18:7-17 – January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009

- Last week we began in chapter 18, where Paul leaves Athens for the carnal city of Corinth, on this the end of his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey.
  - We looked at a number of remarkable similarities between what Paul faced in this new city, and what we may face in the New Year.
- This is part two of a study titled; "What We May Face Ahead," as we look further at what Paul experienced in this port city of Corinth.
- It's important to know that what Paul faced there resembles what we may face now because Corinth was much like the world is today.
- By way of both review and introduction, we found three of these similarities in verses 1-6, the first of which is the difficulty that he faced.
- 1. It could be very difficult (Verses 1-3)**
- It's important to know that Corinth was an unspeakably difficult place because of its gross hedonism and extreme sexual immorality.
  - One commentator said of Corinth; "none but the tough could survive." Corinth was steeped in the worship of the sex goddess Aphrodite.
- 2. It could be hard financially (Verses 4-5)**
- We're told that it wasn't until Silas and Timothy arrived that Paul was emboldened to preach that Jesus was the Messiah.
  - The reason for this was, in part, because of the financial support they brought with them from Macedonia to help Paul out. (2 Cor. 11:7-11)
  - According to verse 3 in this chapter, Paul needed to work as a tent maker with Aquila and Priscilla because of the financial difficulty.
- 3. It could be met with opposition (Verse 6)**
- After preaching the Gospel, Paul faces opposition from the Jews who became very abusive, even blaspheming the Lord in protest.
  - What's interesting is what Paul does in the face of this opposition, he apologizes to them! No, he tells him that he's through with them.
- 4. It could become very fearful (Verses 7-11)**
- 7 Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. 8 Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. 9 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. 10 For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." 11 So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.
- v7-8 After this heated confrontation, Paul leaves and goes right next door. Then the synagogue ruler and his entire house get saved.
- v9 We're told that one night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him to not be afraid, but to keep on speaking and not be silent.
- v10 The Lord gives him the reason to not be afraid, He promises Paul that He will be with him and that no one will attack or harm him.
- v11 Because the Lord had many people in Corinth for Paul to reach, he stayed for a year and a half preaching and teaching the Word.
- This brings up an interesting question; "why was Paul afraid?" He's supposed to be unflinching in his fearlessness to preach the gospel.
  - One suggestion is that he wasn't so much afraid of the persecution of him, as much as the overwhelming worldliness around him.
  - Perhaps Paul was afraid that he wouldn't be successful reaching very many people in this ungodly place like what happened in Athens.
  - This may explain why the Lord tells Paul that He has many people in Corinth. He's sort of telling Paul that he will indeed succeed.
  - It's interesting to note that the Lord came at night. Also, He didn't tell Paul they wouldn't try to stop him, only that they wouldn't succeed.
- Before we move on, I think we would be grossly remiss were we to not note the Lord's solution to the Apostle Paul's perceived fear.
1. Obey the Lord's command to not be afraid
  2. Keep on speaking to people about the Lord
  3. Trust that the Lord will always be with you
  4. Believe that no harm will come upon you
  5. Know that God is not yet through with you
- 5. It could become illegal to worship (Verses 12-17)**
- 12 While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. 13 "This man," they charged, "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law." 14 Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, "If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. 15 But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law-settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things." 16 So he had them ejected from the court. 17 Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court. But Gallio showed no concern whatever.
- v12-13 The Jews launch a "united attack" on Paul bringing him into court, charging him with persuading people to worship God illegally.
- v14-15 Gallio decides that the government has no legitimate role in judging on religious matters, only on serious criminal wrongdoing.
- v16-17 He has them thrown out of court. Then they beat Sosthenes, who's the new synagogue ruler in front of Gallio. He does nothing.
- Interesting to note; Sosthenes later becomes a believer in Christ, (1 Cor 1:1). Some people need to get beat up before they get saved.